

Montana DEQ Forest Fire Smoke Advisory

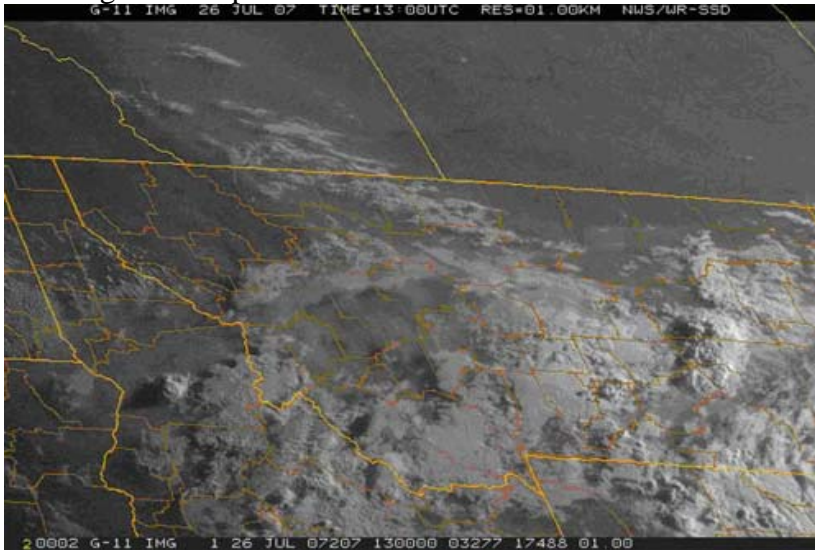
July 26 2007

10:00 AM Thursday

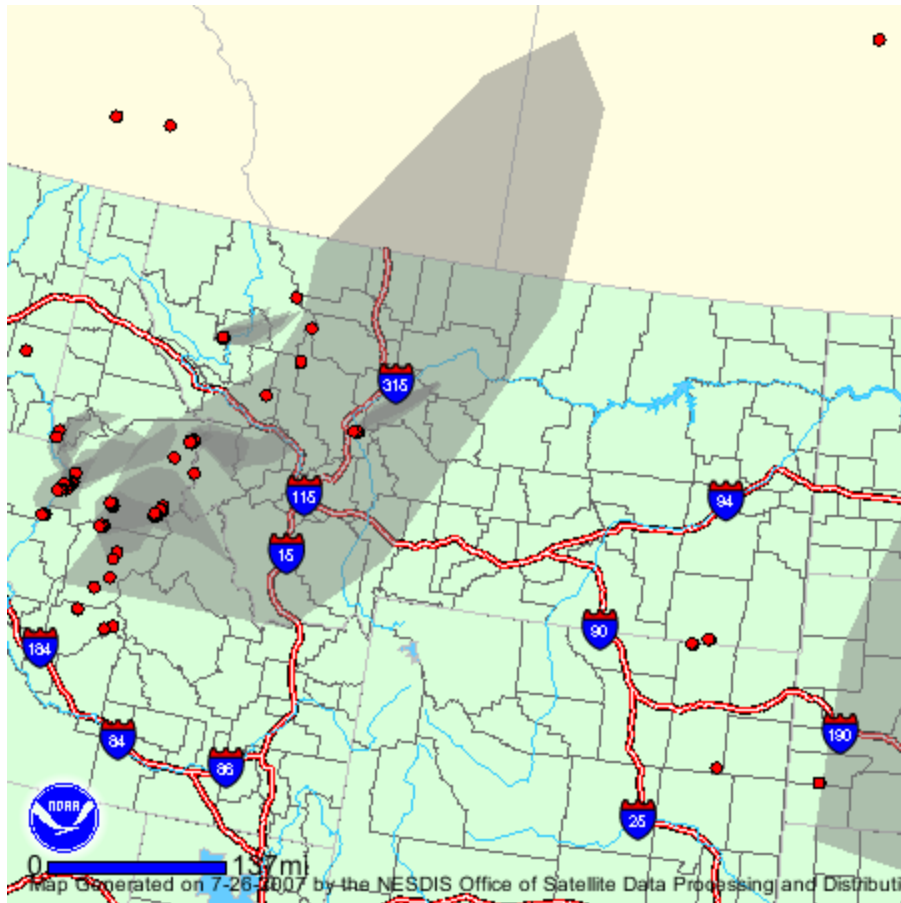
Current Situation

There is a broad band of smoke aloft over western and southwestern Montana this morning. The smoke aloft has not mixed down to the surface in significant quantities yet this morning but surface impacts in the Missoula, Hamilton, Butte, and Helena areas are expected to rise for several hours later this morning as the smoke from the fires in Idaho crosses overhead. All of this area is currently at [MODERATE](#) this morning. The Helena area will also be subject to severe smoke impacts from local smoke produced by the Meriwether fire last night. Thick bands of smoke are drifting around the valley less than 1000 feet overhead and when this smoke comes down conditions could take a strong turn for the worse. See the forecast below for details. Residents near active fires or experiencing noticeable smoke levels should use the [VISIBILITY GUIDELINES](#) to determine smoke levels in their area and guide their activity decisions.

Morning satellite photo centered on Great Falls:



This morning's analysis from NOAA's satellite services division shows the active fires in Montana and the smoke plumes combining and spreading downwind (the analyzed smoke is based on yesterday's satellite coverage, the fire detects are based on last night's satellite coverage)



Red indicates hot spot detected. Grey represents smoke seen by satellite. Fire size is exaggerated for visibility at this scale

To identify individual fires on graphic above go here:

http://activefiremaps.fs.fed.us/lg_fire2.php

A thick layer of elevated smoke is visible from the MDT web cam looking west from the top of MacDonald pass this morning.



The Meriwether fire tops the ridge above the American Bar subdivision at 11 PM Wednesday night as it burns out of Fields Gulch. (Picture by Candace Coefield)





Photo of the pyrocumulus cloud from the Meriwether fire taken from the North Hills of Helena Wednesday evening, July 25th.
(Picture by Cindy Swank)

Real time particulate information is currently available in most of the larger urban areas from several different sources including: DEQ run PM-10 BAMS and PM2.5 BAMS, NWS ASOS visibility monitors, and USFS remote access Nephelometers and BAMS.

This morning's smoke report is below, comparing particulate levels where we have information to MDEQ's Forest Fire health advisory levels.

Updated 10 AM July 26, 2007

Locations and severity of forest fire smoke reports since midnight of the date above at reporting stations.

<u>HAZARDOUS</u>	
<u>VERY UNHEALTHY</u>	
<u>UNHEALTHY</u>	
<u>UNHEALTHY FOR SENSITIVE GROUPS</u>	
<u>MODERATE</u>	Missoula T24 Hamilton T24 Helena T24 Butte T24

T1(x) One-hour TEOM or BAM value (number of values)
T8(x) Eight-hour average TEOM or BAM value(number of values)

T24	24 hour average TEOM or BAM value
Vis(x)	Visibility value(number of hours)
Vis(am/pm) (est)	Visibility value from twice/day reporting stations estimate

Local impacts in areas immediately adjacent to active fires are expected to exceed some or all of the advisory levels. DEQ recommends the use of local [visibility guidelines](#) to evaluate possible health risks and make informed activity decisions.

Forecast

Smoke from the Idaho fires will mix down later this morning in the Missoula, Hamilton, Butte and Helena area producing several hours of elevated smoke concentrations. Conditions are expected to be very bad in parts of Helena and Townsend valleys later this morning. The Meriwether fire in the Gates of the Mountains area put up a very large convective column last evening and into early morning. Most of the smoke was released high enough to head out over the plains where it can not be seen under the cloud deck. Thick bands of residual smoke are drifting directly overhead at this time and surface concentrations under the thickest parts of the plume will likely be very high for a few hours today. Surface winds from the east and northeast are expected to persist through tomorrow in the Helena area and little relief is expected until southwest winds start up tomorrow. Residents of the Helena and Townsend areas need to pay close attention to conditions in their area and use the [visibility guidelines](#) to guide their activity decisions as the situation changes. Strong local impacts are also a possibility in the Polson area and along the Front Range depending on the activity levels of the fires in those areas.

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